

After 20 years, 9/11 gesture still not forgotten

Man receives 2nd thank you for handmade crosses he brought to New York City

By DENISE M. BARAN-UNLAND
dunland@shawmedia.com

Twenty years ago, Bob Figurowski of Joliet took some of his handmade wooden crosses and distributed them to volunteers and first responders at Ground Zero in New York City and at memorial tributes near the site of the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center.

In 2003, Figurowski received a thank you note from one of the volunteers. And he recently received another one, from the same volunteer.

The volunteer's name was Benita Kiernan. Her daughter Kristie Kiernan Bouryal has written several books for children about the events of Sept. 11, 2001: "My Buddy's a Hero - And I Didn't Even Know It," "Remembering Heroes" and "9/11 Courage and Tributes." All three books are available on Amazon.

Kiernan sent a copy of each book to Figurowski "in appreciation for your kindness 20 years ago," she said in her second thank you note to him.

"You are an everyday hero, just like the ones my daughter writes about,"



Gary Middendorf - gmiddendorf@shawmedia.com

Bob Figurowski on Jan 20 is shown holding handmade crosses similar to those he brought to hand out in New York City shortly after 9/11.

Kiernan wrote in the note. Figurowski couldn't believe it. "I'm still in shock that people can

remember you 20 years later, but these people will never forget," Figurowski said. "That was a terrible thing that

happened, that 9/11. As far as history goes, that was close to being as bad as Pearl Harbor."

Figurowski started making wooden crosses 30 years ago. When he retired, Figurowski said his brother told him to find a hobby.

So Figurowski bought a scroll saw from the former Service Merchandise store in Joliet and started crafting various crosses from wood.

"I fell right into it, being a machine operator," Figurowski said. "Of course, I had to practice. Safety first."

After the events of 9/11, Figurowski packed up some of his crosses and headed to New York City.

Kiernan's husband, John Kiernan, was a former lieutenant in New York City's fire department and had recently retired before 9/11. But she said John felt "he had to go" help with the rescue, and later the recovery efforts.

"He had worked in several fire houses and several rescues companies," Kiernan said. "So we knew so

See CROSSES, page 8



HELPING OUR VETERANS GO FURTHER!

Introducing the new **BankFinancial Veterans Multifamily Loan Program**. Exclusive for our Service members, Veterans, and eligible spouses purchasing multifamily investment properties.

Veteran Loan Program Features:

- Rate Discount: Up to 0.50%
- Loans up to \$5,000,000
- Properties: 5+ Units
- Acquisition / Rate & Term Refi / Cash-Out Refi
- LTV: Up to 82.5%
- Amortization: Up to 30 years
- Loans greater than 65% LTV require Investment Equity Loan Product

*All loans subject to credit approval. To receive a Veteran Loan discount, at least 50% of the ownership of the property must be a US military veteran, active duty service member, or spouse of a Veteran or active duty service member. This is an advertisement.

BankFinancial
Commercial Real Estate Lending
Capital Markets

Call 1.833.894.6999 or visit BankFinancial.com today!

1.833.894.6999 | BankFinancial.com



PRIME PROPERTIES

APARTMENTS, UNFURNISHED

Joliet - 1BR, 1BA, Living room, kitchen, appli, off st. parking \$800/mo. + dep.
Call 630-697-2235

JOLIET Studio & 1 BR

Utilities & Appl incl, on site laundry. Updated units near bus & downtown. \$499 - \$715/mo
815-726-2000 jolietrentalunits.com

Twin Oaks Large Pretty 2 BR appl DW 2 AC stainless appl sep mirror din blinds free heat avail now
815-744-1155

Twin Oaks West Beautiful 2 BR stainless appl cathedral ceilings updated kit with island DW blinds
815-744-5141

ROOMS FOR RENT

EFFICIENCIES - MAZON, NO LEASE
Kitchen, Laundry, Utilities Provided.
630-698-2229

Joliet Downtown - Furnished Room

Updated & clean, Utilities incl.
\$299 - \$499/mo
No security deposit. 815-722-1212

Joliet Westside Furnished Room

Fridge & microwave, on site laundry
Updated near bus & downtown.
No proc. fee. 815-726-2000

There is a better way...



Got something you really want to sell? Put it in front of the faces of thousands of readers everyday in the Classifieds.
Call today to place your ad!

• CROSSES

Continued from page 7

many of the people who had passed.”

Kiernan became one of the volunteers at Ground Zero. And she clearly remembers “the box of all the beautiful little wooden crosses” and how the volunteers could select the one

they liked, she said.

“It was such a wonderful thing he did for everybody,” Kiernan said. “I felt his crosses comforted so many people. It struck me that there were so many in the box. Nobody could believe it. There were so many different ones.”

Even Kiernan brought a cross home with her. “It’s been at my bed-

side all these years,” she said.

Kiernan said that her daughter wrote books about 9/11 for children because children should know about 9/11’s everyday heroes.

“People should know they were heroes,” Kiernan said. “Not because they passed, but how they lived.”

Kiernan wasn’t certain whether Figurowski still lived at the same

address when she sent the second note and books.

“I’d always looked at the cross and thought, ‘I really should try to get in touch with him,’” Kiernan said. “It was one of those things I was always going to do. After 20 years, I figured it was long overdue. I didn’t know if I could get in touch with him. But I felt I had to try.”